
The endangerment of Mendriq's traditional knowledge in Malaysia

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Abstract: Traditional knowledge is becoming important to the Orang Asli for survival because they live near the forest and are confronted with changes. However, in changing times, the ownership of traditional knowledge has not been getting any attention from the Orang Asli. Moreover, their ownership of such knowledge is given impetus by the insistence on monetary value. Based on these concerns, this article proposes to explore the ownership of traditional knowledge and its endangerment among the Mendriq. The data on Orang Asli was collected from the Mendriq tribe in Kuala Lah, Gua Musang, Kelantan, Malaysia through focus group discussions (FGD) and in-depth interview methods. The study found five states of traditional knowledge ownership among participants. First, knowing the name and the nourishment; second, knowing the name and confusing the function; third, knowing the nourishment but not the name; fourth, knowing the name and not the physical form; and fifth, not knowing the name or the function. Those states happen as a result of three factors, namely, individual, community and traditional knowledge per se. However, this study found that monetary value is a prominent push factor for traditional knowledge ownership. This reality has had positive and negative effects on traditional knowledge. To counter that, capacity-building activities for traditional knowledge should be promoted.

Keywords: Orang Asli; Mendriq tribe; traditional knowledge; traditional medicine; endangerment; community development; capacity-building.

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1 Introduction

Malaysia is known as a multiracial society comprised of Malay, as the majority group, and several minority groups. One minority group is the Orang Asli or indigenous people. The Orang Asli in Peninsular Malaysia are divided into three main groups of tribes, namely Negrito, Senoi and Proto-Malay. The categorisation was made by the British ruler to smooth the running of the administration for their time (Edo, 2006).

According to Nor (1998), the Negrito group is believed to have arrived in Peninsular Malaysia about 25,000 years ago. The Senoi group came around 6,000–8,000 years ago and was followed by the Proto-Malay group about 4,000 years ago. The Negrito group consists of six tribes, namely Kensiu (northeastern Kedah), Kintak (Kedah and Perak borders), Lanoh (northern Perak), Jahai (northeastern Perak and western Kelantan), Mendriq (southeastern Kelantan) and Bateq (Kelantan Pahang). The Senoi group also contains six tribes: Temiar (northern Perak and southern Kelantan), Semai (northeastern Pahang and southern Perak), Che Wong (Selangor coast), Jah Hut, Semoq Beri and Mah Meri. The third group is the Proto-Malay, most of whom live in southern Peninsular Malaysia, namely Pahang, Johor, Negeri Sembilan and Selangor. The Proto-Malay

consists of Temuan, Semelai, Jakun, Orang Kanaq, Orang Seletar and Orang Kuala tribes. Their overall population is 178,197 people, divided into groups as follows: Negrito 5,009, Senoi 97,856, Proto-Malay 75,332 (JAKOA, 2019). However, this study focuses on the Mendriq tribe only.

Conscious of their diverse backgrounds, undeniably they have various points of difference, including language, culture and religion (Komar and Amir Zal, 2014). Their settlement location is also different, according to JHEOA (2004). There are 876 Orang Asli villages in Peninsular Malaysia. In the specific location, only six villages are in the city area, 505 villages located in the fringe area and 365 villages are still in the interior area (JHEOA, 2004).

The Orang Asli are associated with traditional knowledge, which has become their special identity. Traditional knowledge is defined as knowledge that belongs to a cultural group, which is born in a culture, unique and associated with a place (Dan et al., 2010). According to Fernando (2003), traditional knowledge refers to knowledge that was created internally by a community, is practiced in that community and is not affected by interaction with external parties.

The Orang Asli are also described as experts in forest matters, which reflects their ability to recognise forest resources and skill in how to use them. Their expertise is prevalent in their life and has a direct connection to the environment, especially as their settlement is surrounded by natural resources. The traditional knowledge has become their identity and has established a symbiotic relationship (Lauderdale, 2008). However, the Orang Asli's traditional knowledge in this article has referring to their knowledge and skill on traditional medicine knowledge in which have inherited by generation.

2 Problems of ownership of traditional knowledge

Traditional knowledge is not just part of the Orang Asli identity but is also essential knowledge for their survival. That 'survival' does not simply mean the need for traditional knowledge to live, but also a requirement to survive in a mainstream system which is different from the traditional system. It is realised by Dan et al. (2010) that ownership of traditional knowledge is influenced by current activities and their experiences. Especially nowadays, the Orang Asli have begun to participate in economic activities to earn money (Gomes, 2004), either through the existing traditional knowledge (Amir Zal and Redzuan, 2010) or by engaging in new work that is not related to traditional knowledge. This contrasts with the traditional values of the Orang Asli, in which the usage of traditional knowledge was not for money-generating purposes, but instead the products of their work were shared with community members without expecting a return (Dentan, 1968).

Currently, they are plagued by a high cost of living (Omar et al., 2014) and are starting to bear the same cost of living as other communities, including utility costs (electricity and water bills), costs for basic necessities such as food (rice, sugar, etc.), clothing and other facilities such as transportation (Amir Zal and Redzuan, 2012). Hence, they may reconsider the value of traditional knowledge, including utilising it to produce money, as practiced by most other Orang Asli who are occupied in other work that is not related to traditional knowledge (Amir Zal et al., 2016).

Such a situation was discussed by Hipwell (2009), who found that the ownership of traditional knowledge was changing due to economic considerations. In fact, change is unavoidable because the community has realised that development brings different values than traditional values (Hipwell, 2009). According to Briggs et al. (2007), through community relationships with others, including development, indigenous communities are required to change their traditional knowledge, either by increasing or reducing existing traditional knowledge, even replacing traditional knowledge where it is no longer relevant.

They had to make three extreme choices: whether to pursue traditional knowledge by maintaining traditional values (i.e., not based on monetary priority); practicing traditional knowledge by modifying it based on the value of money; or leaving it by engaging in activity or work that produces money directly. That choice placed the Orang Asli in a dilemma, but they still had to make a decision. For example, Amir Zal's (2013) study shows that the Orang Asli (Orang Kuala) decided to have a new identity as a dealer rather than a traditional identity in which they were a traditional sea people and relied on the sea to get money. The reality does not happen because of their choice, but involves the inclusion of external values, namely through policy. Based on the issues raised, this paper focuses on exploring the ownership of traditional knowledge in medicine type and its endangerment among the Mendriq.

3 Methodology

To explore this situation, this study was conducted on the Orang Asli among the Mendriq tribe (hereinafter called Mendriq) in the village of Kuala Lah, Gua Musang, Kelantan, Malaysia by using focus group discussions (FGD) and in-depth interview methods. It was carried out using an exploratory case study design, which is suitable to explore an area or subject and allows us to investigate whether the variables in the case are assumed either to exist or not. This design also gives us the opportunity to explore as many as possible data-related variables of study to develop new ideas by focusing on the question of how and why. This decision is parallel to that of Dul and Hak (2008), who stated that this design is not only good for investigating how and why questions but is also particularly suitable for developing new theories and ideas.

Since this study involves exploratory elements, we believe the right method of data collection to be used is based on a qualitative approach. In addition, this approach is considered a serious view of research subjects to explore the reality of a study, as stated by Auerbach and Silverstein (2003). Thus, the study has decided to use two different methods, namely in-depth interviews and FGD. The use of interview methods allows us to explore as much data as possible, but it depends on the type of interview protocol that has been used. As explained by Seidman (2006), by using the interview, the research will obtain as much information as possible contained in their story and offer much meaningful data to a study. To avoid losing focus in the field, we decided to use a semi-structured interview protocol based on the objective of the study and on the literature review. This protocol is used for both methods, in-depth interviews and FGD.

Why does this research use this protocol? The protocol is a participant-centred approach, which enables participants to bring up issues that are important to them, as well as producing rich and detailed data. At the same time, it also helps the researcher to set an agenda and makes them capable of controlling the situation to avoid gathering unrelated

data (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000). This protocol is different to other protocols (unstructured and structured), because it gives space to the researcher to ask questions based on a list of questions, and at the same time the researcher is able to ask more questions to probe participants' answers.

The semi-structured protocol contains detailed questions on traditional knowledge that is related to their daily routine in the context of herbs: the types, characteristics, nourishment value, physical form and technique to gather. The protocol also incorporates the practice of traditional knowledge, difficulties or challenges and their motives. The interview was conducted in the Malay language; although the Mendriq have their own language, they can understand Malay. This is because they have been exposed to Malay in their daily routine, either in school, the neighbourhood or in economic activities, and some of them are even married to Malay people.

Since this study has adapted the semi-structured interview protocol, there are only four main questions and other questions have been added according to informants' feedbacks. The four questions are:

- 1 What is the traditional medical knowledge is still known by you?
- 2 What is the traditional medical knowledge is still practiced?
- 3 What is the impetus you practice the traditional medical knowledge?
- 4 What are the challenges that faced in practicing the traditional medical knowledge?

To conduct an in-depth interview, six participants were involved, and they were selected by using purposive sampling based on three criteria, namely, age, gender and involvement in traditional knowledge activity. The age criteria in this study involve two different age categories, namely, individuals between 15 and 30; and those 31 and above. The categorisation is based on the assumption that subjects from 15 to 30 years old are still in the process of forming their self-identity, including in the aspect of traditional knowledge, while subjects 31 and above are individuals who believe in and practice traditional knowledge. This study has male participants only, as traditionally Mendriq men are involved consistently in traditional knowledge compared to the women. The study also expurgated their involvement in traditional knowledge, which is restricted to Mendriq who involved in traditional knowledge only were selected. They also accepted although they are not known and not practice consistently with traditional knowledge.

4 Findings and discussion

4.1 Traditional knowledge ownership

The results show five different states of ownership of traditional knowledge

- 1 know the name and the nourishment
- 2 know the name but confuse the function
- 3 know the function but not the name
- 4 know the name but not the physical form
- 5 do not know the name or the function.

4.1.1 Know the name and the nourishment

The study found that some groups of participants know about herbs and how to use them. They are adult participants and often explore the jungle to get herbs. At the same time, this situation shows their dependence on traditional knowledge. However, this dependency is for their own usage and depends on the request of the outside community. Their usage meant that they use certain herbs for themselves or other people who are familiar with them, whether for healthcare, healing or energy. They believe that materials have benefits if taken correctly. In addition, they also possess traditional knowledge due to their frequency of seeking herbs in the forest to fulfil the requests of other people, whether in their own community or outside. This includes for the purposes of sale and earning money. This reality has been shared by Turner et al. (2000), who find that the possession of traditional knowledge is formed within a certain period and is driven by its value.

Participants also gather and store herbs even though they are not in demand. However, the purpose for which these herbs were collected is for their own usage and for future requests from certain individuals at certain times. Since they are exploring and using them, they can recognise and use herbs well. This was stated by Lauderdale (2008), who found a routine custom allowing a community to have specific traditional knowledge. In this study, the use of herbs is largely driven by demand from outside communities. According to Hipwell (2009), that is not unexpected, but such activity can threaten traditional knowledge.

4.1.2 Know the name but confuse the function

There are participants who know the names of certain herbs, but they are confused by their names and how they are used. This happens because of two factors. First, they know certain names because these are often mentioned, either in the community or outside. Second, there are certain herbs that have many functions that are trusted by the community, and these various functions cause the participants to misrepresent their proper function. However, while participants are not aware of the function of a herb, they are disturbed by the divergent functions believed by the community.

This confusion causes them not to be courteous on the issue of traditional knowledge, especially when considering that they have no interest in traditional knowledge. Hence, they do not use it regularly, either for themselves or others. They know about the traditional knowledge because it is known inside or outside of their community. This situation is quite a concern, as according to Hipwell's study (2009), if this situation continues it can cause the community to forget about their traditional knowledge.

4.1.3 Know the function but not the name

The study found that there were participants who acknowledged certain herbs they used based on their function, but did not know their name. There are also participants who can recognise herbs through physical appearance but cannot give them their proper names. This situation occurs due to three factors: first, the similarity of physical form to other herbs; second, because they are managed by others and the participants only use them; and third, they are not interested in knowing it and feel it is enough for them just to use the herbs without knowing their names.

The first factor is caused by herbs being similar to other herbs, which leads the participants not to be sure of their real name. However, they still believe in their function. For the second factor, they only use herbs if necessary and those herbs are managed or provided by others without the participant being directly involved. Moreover, when certain herbs are mixed with other herbs it is difficult to see the original form. The third factor is that they do not consider traditional knowledge as meaningful in their lives. For example, there are participants who said that if they have health problems, they can go to the clinic and take modern medicines. This situation occurs when a community is beginning to accept modern education and starting to believe in other knowledge which benefits them too (Callaghan and Colton, 2008).

4.1.4 Know the name but not the physical form

The study found there were participants who knew the name of a herb, but do not know its physical form. This is the most common situation among participants. For them, it is easy to know or remember herbal names because they are familiar with the names, which at the same time are also known by their community or outside the community. However, it is difficult for them to identify the related herbs accurately.

This is because herbs have many names and sometimes their names are different from other communities. In addition, there is also the use of herbs by combining various herbs. Skilled participants can identify herbal names based on the character and specialty herbs. However, others do not have the skills and cannot determine them accurately. This situation was given attention by Amir Zal et al. (2014), who are aware of the difficulty of the Orang Asli in determining precisely what traditional knowledge is, despite knowing its name in general. Further, according to Amir Zal et al. (2014), this is a hint of a threat to a community's capital.

4.1.5 Do not know the name or the function

There are participants who admit that they do not know the names of some herbs in their environment, including their function. However, this comprises only certain herbs and not all herbs. This situation occurs due to three factors: first, herbs are rarely used or rarely mentioned by the community; second, they do not care about herbs; and third, it is difficult to find herbs. The first factor, herbs being rarely used, indicates that herbs are not needed either for their own purposes or because of a lack of demand from outside communities. Within a certain period, involving a long time, the participants admitted that the knowledge began to be almost forgotten by their communities and outside communities.

For the second factor, there are participants who say that they do not feel it is important to know about herbs. They just need to rely on other people to tell them when they need to and there are other, easier alternatives such as modern medicine. In addition, because they are more focused on non-traditional jobs to earn money, it is no longer important to know about herbs. For the third factor, the participants acknowledged that there are herbs that are tough to obtain, and even certain herbs that are alleged to no longer exist. This reality shows the occurrence of the extinction of certain herbs. It is unfortunate that not many participants try to cultivate herbs in permanent crops (arboriculture). Instead, they just wait for them to grow naturally.

The three factors that led to the situation of the name and the function being unknown was indirectly reviewed by many other researchers. Some of the factors that occurred were the result of economic pressures, whereas according to Hipwell (2009) such situations happen due to factors both within and outside the control of communities.

4.2 The ownership of traditional knowledge factors

The previous results showed that there were five different situations regarding the ownership of traditional knowledge among participants. Each condition is shaped by different factors. This study found three factors, namely individual factors, community factors and traditional knowledge factors per se, detailed in what follows.

4.2.1 Individual factors

Individual factors refer to the ownership of traditional knowledge because of the choice and under the control of participants. This paper classifies individual factors into three subfactors, namely, dependence; commitment; and attitude. In the dependence factor, there are four subfactors, namely, frequency of use; dependence on others; use only when needed; and involvement only as a user. Meanwhile, under the commitment factor, there are two subfactors, namely, feeling it is not a priority; and various commitments. For attitude factor, there are two subfactors, namely, not interested; and not caring about traditional knowledge.

Regarding the first factor (dependence), the subfactor for the group of factors has the most number of factors. This illustrates that the dependency element is under their own choice. That is, making the choice to use herbs, to deepen their knowledge or to diligently use them depends on the participants. In the matter of dependency on other individuals, the situation shows that they are not interested in learning traditional knowledge and feel that it is just enough to be a user rather than to be able to produce or process herbs, though it is not difficult to do so. Instead, they choose not to care about them and rely on others.

About the commitment factor, these factors are also under the control of participants and they can make their own decision to respond. This gives a picture of their decision to choose priorities from some other options. Participants show that they do not make the ownership and practice of traditional knowledge a priority. They are more concerned about work that can generate better and consistent income. However, uniquely among the Mendriq, although they choose to engage in monetary jobs, the job is usually related to traditional knowledge. In this study, they are involved with other traditional knowledge that is demanded by outside communities, such as that related to bamboo, rattan and so on. Briggs et al. (2007) suggested that through interaction with other communities, traditional communities will enhance and diminish existing knowledge, as well as replace or reduce traditional knowledge that is no longer relevant.

In addition, the possession of traditional knowledge related to herbs is also weak because they do not have time to use them or know about them, or lack the effort to deepen them. They have other commitments, especially when they are involved with a job to earn money. This encourages them no longer to be interested in possessing and maintaining the traditional knowledge. The attitude factor has two subfactors, namely, not being interested; and lack of attention. Both factors are derived from the second subfactor, which involves elements of commitment and involvement. However, the focus

on traditional knowledge that builds interest and caring about herbs is due to the requirement of money. Therefore, they are forced to choose an uncomplicated way despite having to act against traditional knowledge.

This is in line with the findings of Zula and Chermack (2007) and Callaghan and Colton (2008) about the consciousness of and insistence on the utilisation of money, so people switch to consider choosing the value of money. In fact, according to Zula and Chermack (2007), traditional societies are concerned with increasing income in their daily activities.

4.2.2 Community factor

Traditional knowledge ownership is also influenced by community factors, either in the Mendriq community or outside. This study found that whether traditional knowledge was dispersed or less known by participants depends on whether traditional knowledge still has practical value. Practical value is associated with monetary value, especially when it has a demand from outside communities. Amir Zal (2013) realised that this situation happened among the Orang Asli and its relation to economic empowerment, in which they tended to ignore the existing traditional knowledge because of the practical value for their survival.

The ownership of traditional knowledge is held by participants when it is still known and widely used in the community. If community members continue to know the names and believe in the efficacy of herbs, including frequent access to the forest to find herbs, the traditional knowledge is still owned by the participants. On the other hand, if herbs are rarely mentioned, sought or used in a community, it is difficult for participants to know about them. According to Turner et al. (2000), traditional knowledge is becoming their identity and will be preserved. Among the ways of doing so is to continue the process of learning or socialisation among community members (Lauderdale, 2008). The results of this study show that socialisation efforts are not happening well in the Mendriq community.

Whether traditional knowledge is sought or used by a community, it relies on two factors, namely, their belief in herbal benefits; and the demand from outside communities. Within the community, there are certain herbs that are still used, either consistently or at a particular time. The use of herbs consistently reflects their beliefs in their traditional knowledge, but the participants are not really practiced in it, especially among the younger group.

Nevertheless, the strong impetus to the ownership of traditional knowledge is the demand from the outside community. It was realised by Dan et al. (2010) that traditional knowledge is influenced by current experiences, including the influence of the outside community. The outside community consists of two groups, namely, middlemen and users. The middlemen are individuals who ask the participants to get certain herbs for sale on the outside market.

Participants seek this situation because they earn money in exchange. Similarly, users from the outside community find a person among the Mendriq and ask them to look for herbs for specific uses. However, for both the middleman and the user, this is seasonally based. Participants realise that they cannot rely solely on such requests because they do not generate consistent revenue. Zula and Chermack (2007) explain that clearly communities are desperate to use their knowledge to earn money for their necessities.

4.2.3 *Traditional knowledge per se factor*

This study also found that the possession of traditional knowledge is influenced by the traditional knowledge factor itself. Participants trust and consistently practice traditional knowledge when it is proven effective. Then, they continue to use it and pass it on to others. However, it also depends on the difficulty in gaining and using it. The hard-to-find means is either to seek more time or effort to get it in the jungle or its lesser existence due to the threat of extinction (Amir Zal et al., 2014).

Participants admit that herbs are increasingly difficult to collect and that they need more time and effort to acquire them because they are located deep in the forest. Moreover, they are not grown arboriculturally, but left to grow naturally (Amir Zal and Redzuan, 2012). Participants admit that at times certain herbs are difficult to obtain because of competition between the Mendriq and outsiders. There are uncertain outsiders who are also looking for herbs. This causes particular herbs to be rapidly reduced and threatened by extinction. This situation is worrying for the participants and causes many young people no longer to recognise certain herbs.

In addition, the traditional knowledge factor itself also determines whether it is easy to possess or not. It is more difficult when traditional knowledge requires the mixing of herbs. There is a certain herb that has been processed in particular ways so that it can no longer be seen in its original form. Such herbs can only be identified by experienced persons. This factor causes participants to have difficulty knowing about it, so they act as if they ignore it.

4.3 *Endangerment of traditional knowledge and the power of monetary value*

Based on the reality of acquiring traditional knowledge by participants, it can prevent local potential in the form of community capital (traditional knowledge) being utilised to develop them, while according to the discipline of community development, the utilisation of existing potential within the community will have a good impact and can last for a long period of time. This fact illustrates that the approach is challenged by the Mendriq reality. Specifically, the challenge is whether to maintain the 'original form' of community capital or to accept the current rhythm of using it for monetary benefit. Moreover, community capital in its original form does not focus solely on profit making, rather than maintaining a communal value. This corresponds to the natural nature of human relationships as a mutual action.

That nature can be observed from Dentan's writing (1968), which shows that the Orang Asli Semai share their forest products with other community members for free, and even feel aggravated if there is an element of thanks. The situation illustrates that the traditional community is more concerned with the communal spirit that seeks to meet each other's needs, rather than using the conditions for individual benefit. For the traditional community, the value of money is not a priority.

However, the reality is that modern societies are experiencing varying forms of change based on the demands of longstanding industrialisation, and then the community is pressured by the need for money. In particular, access to necessities requires a certain cost, which means that communal values are increasingly threatened and no longer a priority. This also affects the traditional knowledge that has been owned and practiced based on communal interests. Previously, traditional societies practiced their traditional

knowledge because it was believed and proved to be for their good (Briggs et al., 2007). At the same time, traditional knowledge is directly linked to their identity.

On the other hand, the change in the value of traditional knowledge occurs as an effect of interaction with the outside community, which relies on a monetary value system (Zula and Chermack, 2007). The adoption is increasing when their lives are also surrounded by specific developments that are translated into physical form, such as residential houses, 24-hour electricity, vehicles, gasoline and so on, which need money to maintain or acquire.

The Mendriq are desperate when their basic needs such as rice, sugar and so on can only be gained through money-based exchanges. They are increasingly exposed to these different values in two ways and they do not realise it, namely, through the development efforts undertaken by various parties; and through interaction with the outside community. This is not a strange situation, because, according to Rogers and Svenning (1969), it is certain that the benchmark for 'development' is based on economic growth such as income or increase in money.

The development brought by the government, through the construction of infrastructure in Orang Asli settlements, has the value of maintenance that requires money. For example, to get electricity 24 hours a day, they must pay monthly bills and they are not subsidised by the government. Meanwhile, their relationship with the outside community has also caused the Mendriq to be exposed to the use of money.

From the world-system theory perspective, Murray (1980) states that the spread of capitalist values in which there is a focus on monetary value affect all levels of society. According to Murray (1980), the process of applying capitalist values does not spread directly, but rather tries to absorb and replaces the non-capitalist system slowly. Because of direct or indirect interaction, it still points to the absorption of money-centric values, and even becomes one of the new values for the Mendriq's traditional knowledge acquisition.

In the context of the potential of community capital, maintaining the original 'form' of traditional knowledge has no place in the capitalist world that concerns money-based benefits. On the contrary, traditional knowledge needs improvement so that it looks 'new' and profitable. The reality was shared by Cardamone and Rentschler (2006), who found that the traditional knowledge of indigenous Australians was able to contribute to the country's revenue after experiencing improvements, either from aspects of quality or the process of delivery. In the context of community development, the improvement effort is known as 'capacity building' (Amir Zal, 2016).

The factors of the ownership and practice of traditional knowledge are largely driven by the desire to earn money (Zula and Chermack, 2007). Traditional knowledge is only sustained if it brings monetary benefits. However, the situation is not a negative one to avoid. It shows how the community has adapted to the capitalist system, which has not only affected the mainstream society in that it has blended with capitalist values, but also the traditional society, despite its proximity to industrial areas.

It directly creates a clear dependency between traditional and mainstream societies. The Mendriq have no choice but to admit that. Such a reality was once realised by Scott (1976) when commenting on the changes that occurred among peasants. Peasants have no choice whether to engage or not in money-based economic activities. This is because the basic needs they produce in a specific form (rice) cannot meet their other needs without money. Hence, they need money as an exchange tool.

In the context of the Mendriq, the dependency is beneficial to them, but the benefits are unbalanced, in that the outsiders benefit more from the Mendriq. Moreover, the Mendriq provide herbs in a raw and unprocessed form. Outsiders, either as middlemen or processors, gain multiple profits, as the results of the study by Amir Zal and Redzuan (2012) reveal. Their findings are that certain Orang Asli forest resources are sold cheaply to middlemen, while actual prices on the market, either before being processed or after processing, are much higher. The dependency only benefits the Orang Asli in a small ratio, rather than the huge profit gained by the outsiders.

This challenges the beliefs of supporters of the community development discipline, which does underscore the need to build capacity on existing community capital. Maintaining the original forms of community capital, including traditional knowledge in a monetary pressure situation, is no longer a priority. In fact, the community needs more the practical value of community capital for their lives. Hence, an approach that builds capacity on community capital, especially on traditional knowledge, is greatly needed.

However, unfortunately, the participants in this study are still not at that stage. They show high dependency on outsiders and even their ownership of traditional knowledge is determined by outsiders' demand. If there is no demand, they will ignore it. This reality does not give a positive sign for the Mendriq, especially in regard to their traditional knowledge. If the situation remains, this will place their traditional knowledge under threat.

5 Implications and recommendations

This study found five conditions of ownership of traditional knowledge among participants, namely, know the name and the nourishment; know the name and confuse the function; know the nourishment but not the name; know the name and not the physical form; and do not know the name or the function. The situation is not bizarre but shows the reality of ownership and the pursuit of traditional knowledge in a community. It is interesting that originally traditional knowledge was in the form of communal property, which assumed that every member of the community had the same traditional knowledge.

On the other hand, this study reveals that assumptions are not happening, and individual ownership is more prominent. It recognises three factors that cause the situation, namely, individual, community and traditional knowledge factors. However, the substantial factor of ownership is the value of money. That is, the consideration of having traditional knowledge is dependent on generating money.

The situation has major implications for traditional knowledge, both positive and negative. Positively, the utilisation of traditional knowledge makes it a form of 'survival capital' in meeting the urges of money-based development. The Mendriq show their own ability to be self-reliant even though they do not earn much money. In addition, it is an indication that they are not marginalised in development, and even try to be a significant market player by supplying certain requirements to outsiders.

On the negative side, participants choose to have traditional knowledge only if they perceive the value of money and translate this by emphasising the fulfilment of outsiders' demand. Otherwise, they are not inclined to have traditional knowledge. This would undoubtedly place traditional knowledge in an endangered situation, while traditional knowledge is the identity of the Orang Asli, which is well known by other communities.

To balance both implications, this paper believes that the need for capacity-building elements is applied to the Mendriq's traditional knowledge. Capacity building refers to efforts to increase existing community capital to a better level (Amir Zal, 2016). This is based on the belief in the community development discipline that a community has potential in the form of community capital, including traditional knowledge. Capacity building includes efforts to document existing traditional knowledge, being empowered to enhance herbal potential through scientifically proven effort, processing herbs into new products (not retailing in raw form) and teaching people marketing knowledge to make bigger profits than using intermediaries. This effort will take a long time and require the collaboration of all parties. However, if this effort succeeds, it will not only place the Mendriq on a higher level of empowerment but can also be a sustainable form of capital for them.

But to sustain this strategy, the most important part is to ensure the strategies of capacity building should also be based on Orang Asli's opinions rather than a top-down suggestion. As confronted by Amir Zal et al. (2016), any development process which ignore the opinion of communities and abandoned their involvement will have not able to sustain the development. This situation also has faced by many scholars such as Aguiñaga et al. (2018), Cho (2014), Dimitrov et al. (2013), El Asmar et al. (2012) and Bowen and Acciaioli (2009). Those scholars have a similar opinion on how important of the bottom-up approach compare to the top-down approach to gain an impactful output to a community.

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